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## Simple Past Tense Errors in Young Writers—An Error Analysis of English Short Stories

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### ABSTRACT :

This study addresses a persistent academic concern in English language learning: young learners' difficulty in producing accurate simple past-tense forms in narrative writing. The research aims to identify the types and distribution of simple past-tense errors committed by elementary school students whose school employs English as a medium of instruction. Using a quantitative descriptive design, the study analyzed 17 short stories selected from the student anthology *My Dream Life*. Data were collected through documentation and examined using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, supported by Ellis's four-step error-analysis procedure. A total of 44 verb errors were identified and categorized. The findings reveal that misformation overwhelmingly dominates the dataset (95.5%), particularly involving irregular verbs, while omission accounts for only a small portion of errors (4.5%); no addition or misordering errors were found. These patterns suggest that students understand the narrative requirement for past-tense usage but have not yet internalized correct morphological forms, especially for irregular verbs. The results underscore the influence of Bahasa Indonesia's tenseless structure on learners' interlanguage and highlight the need for explicit instruction, guided practice, and focused corrective feedback to strengthen young bilingual learners' grammatical accuracy in narrative writing.

**Keywords:** bilingual instruction, error analysis, narrative writing, simple past tense, young learner

## INTRODUCTION

Mastering verb tenses, particularly the simple past tense, is essential for young learners as it enables them to construct coherent narratives and express completed actions<sup>1</sup>. In English writing, errors in the simple past tense are among the most persistent grammatical problems faced by

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<sup>1</sup> Agustinasari, Evi, Tiur Simanjuntak, and Muhammad Bambang Purwanto. 2022. "A Review on Error Analysis Stages in Teaching English Structure." *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature* 14 (1): 253. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v14i1.1702>.

learners whose first language lacks inflectional verb morphology, such as Bahasa Indonesia <sup>2</sup>, especially in narrative context such as short stories <sup>3</sup>.

Previous studies have consistently shown that elementary and secondary students often struggle with past-tense formation, especially in distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs <sup>4 5 6</sup>. These studies also highlight common error patterns such as omission of past inflections or misformation of verb forms, particularly among learners with limited exposure to natural English input.

Several studies and educational reports have documented the prevalence of grammatical errors among English learners in Indonesia, with past tense errors ranking among the most common issues. For instance, a recent survey conducted in elementary schools across urban and rural areas revealed that nearly 60% of students made consistent past tense errors in their written narratives <sup>7</sup>. These errors were particularly pronounced in tasks involving short story writing, where learners were required to use past tense forms extensively. The survey also highlighted a correlation between the frequency of these errors and factors such as limited access to qualified English teachers, inadequate instructional materials, and a lack of practice opportunities in real-life communication contexts.

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<sup>2</sup> Anakampun, Rizky Ananda, and Rahmah Fithriani. 2023. "AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH RECOUNT TEXTS WRITTEN BY INDONESIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS Rizky Ananda Anakampun , Rahmah Fithriani" 7 (1): 177–85. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v7i1.7149>.

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt, T., and T. Strassner. 2022. "Artificial Intelligence in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching." *Anglistik* 33 (1): 165–84. <https://doi.org/10.33675/angl/2022/1/14>.

<sup>4</sup> Apriyanti, Fitri -, and Rahmi Aulia Nurdini. 2021. "Error Analysis on Using Simple Past Tense in Diary Writing Made By Efl Students." *Globish: An English-Indonesian Journal for English, Education, and Culture* 10 (2): 33. <https://doi.org/10.31000/globish.v10i2.4688>.

<sup>5</sup> Nahak, Yulia Ningsi, Anselmus Sahan, and Yanuarius Seran. 2024. "AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS ' USE OF SIMPLE" 06 (02): 240–50.

<sup>6</sup> Putri, Dwi Megista, and Asma Alhusna. 2025. "Error Analysis of Simple Past Tense in Recount Text" 9:11367–70.

<sup>7</sup> Almelhes, Sultan A. 2023. "A Review of Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Second-Language Learning." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 13 (5): 1259–69. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1305.21>.

There are some studies were carried out with the same focus. One of the studies stated that a total of 106 errors were collected from 19 students' recount-text compositions, which were divided into three main aspects: grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Grammar errors comprised the largest share, with 57 errors (53.4%), followed by 26 spelling errors (21.7%) and 23 punctuation errors (24.5%)<sup>8</sup>. Different from Fitria, Apriyanti and Nurdini analysed ten EFL students' diary entries and identified a total of 75 simple past tense errors, which fell into four categories: omission errors (14 instances, 19 %), addition errors (15 instances, 20 %), selection errors (30 instances, 40 %), and ordering errors (16 instances, 21 %)<sup>9</sup>. Selection errors, where students chose incorrect verb forms or structures, emerged as the most frequent issue, highlighting learners' difficulty in selecting appropriate tense morphology, while ordering errors, unnecessary additions, and omitted tense markers also pointed to challenges in mastering the rules governing past-tense construction in written recounts<sup>10</sup>.

The next study was conducted by Nahak (2024) that analysed 35 tenth-grade students' narrative texts yielded a total of 113 simple past tense errors, distributed as 36 omission errors (32 %), 11 addition errors (10 %), 57 misformation errors (50 %), and 9 misordering errors (8 %), with misformation, particularly incorrect past-form verbs and misuse of "to be", emerging as the most frequent error type, underscoring students' struggles to apply correct verb forms and signalling a clear need for focused instructional support in past-tense grammar<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Fitria, Tira Nur. 2020. "Error Analysis in Using Simple Past Tense Found in Students' Writing of Recount Text." *Abmad Dablan Journal of English Studies* 7 (1): 39. <https://doi.org/10.26555/adjes.v7i1.12238>.

<sup>9</sup> Apriyanti, Fitri -, and Rahmi Aulia Nurdini. 2021. "Error Analysis on Using Simple Past Tense in Diary Writing Made By Efl Students." *Globish: An English-Indonesian Journal for English, Education, and Culture* 10 (2): 33. <https://doi.org/10.31000/globish.v10i2.4688>.

<sup>10</sup> Apriyanti, Fitri -, and Rahmi Aulia Nurdini. 2021. "Error Analysis on Using Simple Past Tense in Diary Writing Made By Efl Students." *Globish: An English-Indonesian Journal for English, Education, and Culture* 10 (2): 33. <https://doi.org/10.31000/globish.v10i2.4688>.

<sup>11</sup> Nahak, Yulia Ningsi, Anselmus Sahan, and Yanuaris Seran. 2024. "AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS' USE OF SIMPLE" 06 (02): 240–50.

Errors indicate a lack of ability to properly construct sentences using the correct grammatical structures<sup>12</sup>. This is evident in the study conducted by Putri and Alhusna, stated that total of 46 simple past-tense errors revealed from ten third-semester English Department students which the most dominant error is omission<sup>13</sup>. These variations demonstrate that simple past-tense errors remain a pervasive issue across different learner groups and text types.

However, although a considerable number of studies have examined tense-related difficulties, most of them focus on junior high, senior high, or university-level learners. Research involving elementary-school learners—especially those studying in bilingual-instruction contexts—is still limited. In bilingual settings, English is not only taught as a subject but is also used as the medium of instruction in certain school activities, creating a learning environment that may shape learners' error patterns differently from monolingual EFL contexts. Moreover, few studies have examined young learners' narrative writing, such as short stories, which reflect more authentic, unconstrained use of past-tense forms compared to controlled tasks such as worksheets or diary entries.

Despite the documented prevalence of simple past-tense errors among Indonesian learners, little is known about how these errors manifest in the narrative writing of elementary-school students within bilingual-instruction environments. Existing studies tend to examine older learners or focus on recount or controlled writing tasks, leaving a gap in understanding how younger bilingual learners construct past-tense morphology in authentic storytelling. This creates a clear research problem: the specific types and patterns of simple past-tense errors produced by young bilingual learners in narrative writing remain underexplored, limiting teachers' ability to design targeted pedagogical interventions.

Error analysis in this study is grounded in the four-step procedure proposed by Ellis, which remains one of the most influential models for examining second language learners' production<sup>14</sup>. Ellis explains that error analysis involves identifying the errors in learner output, describing their

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<sup>12</sup> Situmorang, Komilie, and Santa Maya Pramusita. 2024. "Errors Analysis in Using Simple Past Tense in Nursing Students' Writing Assignments." *ETERNAL (English Teaching Journal)* 15 (1): 144–55. <https://doi.org/10.26877/eternal.v15i1.357>.

<sup>13</sup> Putri, Dwi Megista, and Asma Alhusna. 2025. "Error Analysis of Simple Past Tense in Recount Text" 9:11367–70.

<sup>14</sup> Ellis, Rod. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition (Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series)*.

linguistic forms, classifying the types of errors, and explaining their possible sources<sup>15</sup>. This framework provides a structured way to trace how learners construct interlanguage and where their grammatical systems diverge from target-language norms. To classify the errors found in students' writing, the present study adopts the Surface Strategy Taxonomy introduced by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen which focuses on how learners alter the surface form of sentences and classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering<sup>16</sup>. Recent research in Indonesia and other EFL contexts has demonstrated the usefulness of combining Ellis's error-analysis procedures with the Surface Strategy Taxonomy to investigate grammatical errors in oral presentations, business e-mails, narrative writing, and past simple tense usage<sup>17 18 19 20</sup>.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates simple past-tense errors found in short stories written by elementary-school students in a bilingual-instruction setting. The study aims to identify the types and distribution of errors based on Dulay et al.'s Surface Strategy Taxonomy and to provide pedagogical insights for improving grammar instruction at the early-education level. To

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<sup>15</sup> Ellis, Rod. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition (Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series)*.

<sup>16</sup> Dulay, Heidi, Marina Burt, and Stephen Krashen. 1982. *Language Two*. Oxford University Press. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Susilowati, Endang, Etika Dewi Kusumaningtyas, and Zaenul Wafa. 2024. "Surface Strategy Taxonomy on EFL Learners' Oral Presentation: A Study of Grammatical Error Analysis." *English Education and Literature Journal (E-Jou)* 4 (02): 79–90. <https://doi.org/10.53863/ejou.v4i02.1105>.

<sup>18</sup> Desnaranti, Laila, and Febby Pratama Putra. 2024. "Implementing Surface Structure Taxonomy in Analyzing Undergraduate Students' Business E-Mail Errors." *Research and Development Journal of Education* 10 (2): 1078. <https://doi.org/10.30998/rdje.v10i2.23360>.

<sup>19</sup> M.R.F Nashfa, MJF Sujani, MB Nowzath, and MR. Rishad Muhammed. 2025. "Investigating Errors in Past Simple Tense Usage Among English Language Learners As a Second Language : A Contemporary Analysis." *Beginner: Journal of Teaching and Education Management* 3 (1): 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.61166/bgn.v3i1.82>.

<sup>20</sup> Marbun, Paulina, Rina Octavia Simarmata, and Ernawati Tampubolon. 2025. "AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ACTION VERB USAGE IN NARRATIVE WRITING OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMKS IMMANUEL MEDAN." *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10 (September): 315–30.

guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research questions: What types of simple past-tense errors occur in the students' short stories?

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative design <sup>21</sup>, using descriptive statistics to analyze simple past tense errors in students' writing <sup>22</sup>, which focuses on describing existing phenomena using systematic numerical procedures, to identify and classify simple past-tense errors in students' written narratives. The analysis followed the Error Analysis framework <sup>23</sup> and used Surface Strategy Taxonomy <sup>24</sup> as the main classification system for error types.

### **Context and Data Source**

The data were obtained from an anthology of students' short stories titled *My Dream Life*, produced by elementary-school students in a bilingual-instruction setting. The anthology originally contained 54 stories written by students across Grades 1–6. For the purpose of this analysis, 17 stories were selected because they fully met the criteria for narrative writing and contained identifiable verb usage suitable for past-tense error analysis. Each story was written by one student, resulting in 17 student texts forming the data corpus.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis in this study was individual verb tokens. A token was counted as an error when the verb form did not accurately represent simple past-tense morphology according to standard English usage. In total, 44 verb errors were identified across the 17 stories.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data were collected through documentation and text analysis techniques. Following permission from the school, the anthology was examined, and the selected stories were transcribed

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<sup>21</sup> Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Fifth Edition RESEARCH DESIGN Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Writing Center Talk over Time: A Mixed-Method Study*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469237>.

<sup>22</sup> Ary, Donald, Lucy Cheser Jacobs, and Chris Sorensen. 2010. *Introduction to Research in Education, 8th Edition*. 8th ed. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

<sup>23</sup> Ellis, Rod. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition (Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series)*.

<sup>24</sup> Dulay, Heidi, Marina Burt, and Stephen Krashen. 1982. *Language Two*. Oxford University Press. New York: Oxford University Press.

when necessary. Each verb within the texts was read carefully, and all verbs that appeared to express past actions were marked for further analysis. Errors were recorded in a coding sheet containing:

- (1) sentence excerpt,
- (2) incorrect verb form,
- (3) corrected form,
- (4) classification based on error type, and
- (5) notes on possible error sources.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The analysis procedure followed Ellis's four-step framework:

#### (1) Identification of Errors

All verbs appearing in past-time contexts were identified. Verbs that did not conform to simple past-tense rules were marked as errors.

#### (2) Description of Errors

Each error was categorized using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, consisting of four types:

- a) Omission (absence of required morpheme),
- b) Addition (presence of unnecessary morpheme),
- c) Misformation (incorrect form used),
- d) Misordering (incorrect sequence of elements)<sup>25</sup>.

#### (3) Explanation of Errors

Potential causes such as overgeneralization, L1 transfer, or developmental factors were noted qualitatively to support interpretation in the Discussion.

#### (4) Evaluation of Errors

To determine the prominence of each error type<sup>26</sup>, the frequency and percentage of errors were calculated using the formula:

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

where F = frequency of a specific error type and N = total number of errors (44).

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<sup>25</sup> Dulay, Heidi, Marina Burt, and Stephen Krashen. 1982. *Language Two*. Oxford University Press. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, Rod. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition (Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series)*.

## Result

The analysis of the 17 selected short stories revealed a total of 44 simple past-tense errors. These errors appeared in various parts of the narratives, especially in sequences where students attempted to describe events or actions that had already happened. Although the students demonstrated an overall awareness that narratives should be told in the past tense, many of them still struggled to apply the correct verb forms consistently.

A closer examination showed that misformation was by far the most frequent error type. Students often replaced the correct past-tense form with an incorrect or partially inflected version—for example, producing “eated” instead of “ate” or using a present-tense form such as “go” in a clearly past-time context. Out of the 44 errors, 42 instances (95.5%) were categorized as misformation. Many of these involved irregular verbs, suggesting that students tended to generalize the -ed rule or simply relied on forms they were more familiar with.

In contrast, omission occurred much less frequently. Only 2 errors (4.5%) showed missing past-tense markers, such as omitting -ed or leaving a verb in its bare form. Interestingly, the data contained no cases of addition or misordering. This suggests that the students were not randomly manipulating verb structures; instead, they tended to produce verbs that were structurally intact but incorrectly formed.

To illustrate these patterns, Table 1 presents several representative examples of errors drawn from the students’ stories, including the original sentence and the corrected version. Table 2 summarizes the overall distribution of error types identified in the dataset.

**Table 1.** Simple Past Tense Errors in Student Stories (Dulay et al., 1982 taxonomy)

Error Type	Original Sentence	Manipulated Sentence	Story #
<b>Misformation</b>	In the afternoon, I <b>go</b> home from school, and I play games.	In the afternoon, I went home from school, and I played games.	1
<b>Omission</b>	In the afternoon, I go home from school, and I <b>play</b> games.	In the afternoon, I go home from school, and I played games.	1
<b>Misformation</b>	When she <b>comes</b> home, on the way she <b>finds</b> a wallet on the road.	When she came home, on the way she found a wallet on the road.	2
<b>Misformation</b>	After that she <b>sees</b> an old lady who <b>wants</b> to cross the street.	After that she saw an old lady who wanted to cross the street.	2
<b>Misformation</b>	One day, there <b>is</b> a child who <b>is</b> smart and kind.	One day, there was a child who was smart and kind.	2
<b>Misformation</b>	The cat <b>is</b> pregnant, the cat <b>is</b> white and tame.	The cat was pregnant, the cat was white and tame.	3

<b>Misformation</b>	One day, Milo <b>is</b> excited to go to school.	One day, Milo was excited to go to school.	4
<b>Misformation</b>	However, after eating the cake, Milo <b>notices</b> that Bam Bam the Turtle <b>looks</b> sad.	However, after eating the cake, Milo noticed that Bam Bam the Turtle looked sad.	4
<b>Misformation</b>	Once upon a time, in forest there <b>is</b> so many animals.	Once upon a time, in forest there were so many animals.	5
<b>Misformation</b>	They <b>have</b> a party, and then the turtle <b>is</b> meet with the rabbit.	They had a party, and then the turtle was meet with the rabbit.	5
<b>Misformation</b>	They have a party, and then the turtle <b>is meet</b> with the rabbit.	They have a party, and then the turtle met with the rabbit.	5
<b>Misformation</b>	Then, the rabbit and the turtle <b>come</b> .	Then, the rabbit and the turtle came.	5
<b>Misformation</b>	After praying, a rock <b>splits</b> apart and there came out a young man.	After praying, a rock split apart and there came out a young man.	6
<b>Misformation</b>	She <b>is</b> very beautiful, kind daughter.	She was a very beautiful, kind daughter.	7
<b>Misformation</b>	She <b>lives</b> with her parents.	She lived with her parents.	7
<b>Misformation</b>	Bawang putih <b>is</b> very sad, she cried every day.	Bawang putih was very sad, she cried every day.	7
<b>Misformation</b>	2 months later, Malin's wife <b>is</b> pregnant really <b>wants</b> to have a holiday in Pantai Air Manis.	2 months later, Malin's wife was pregnant really wanted to have a holiday in Pantai Air Manis.	8
<b>Misformation</b>	Jelita <b>is</b> known as the lazy, rude, clingy, and disobedient girl.	Jelita was known as the lazy, rude, clingy, and disobedient girl.	9
<b>Misformation</b>	Prabu Siliwangi <b>is</b> known for his hobby of hunting animals in the forest.	Prabu Siliwangi was known for his hobby of hunting animals in the forest.	10
<b>Misformation</b>	Every day, Toba <b>makes</b> a living by farming.	Every day, Toba made a living by farming.	11
<b>Misformation</b>	But unfortunately, the land in his village <b>is</b> barren and less fertile.	But unfortunately, the land in his village was barren and less fertile.	11
<b>Misformation</b>	Therefore, Toba often <b>go</b> to the river to fish.	Therefore, Toba often went to the river to fish.	11
<b>Misformation</b>	One morning, Toba <b>goes</b> to the river to fish.	One morning, Toba went to the river to fish.	11
<b>Misformation</b>	Toba then threw the hook into the river. He <b>hopes</b> to get a lot of fish.	Toba then threw the hook into the river. He hoped to get a lot of fish.	11
<b>Misformation</b>	The fox <b>run</b> away then the hunter <b>hunt</b> the other animal and brought it to their base then...	The fox ran away then the hunter hunted the other animal and brought it to their base then...	13

<b>Misformation</b>	She was a white cat but she <b>is</b> dirty.	She was a white cat but she was dirty.	14
<b>Omission</b>	The cat <b>live</b> in a box alone.	The cat lived in a box alone.	14
<b>Misformation</b>	She <b>eat</b> trash because she <b>don't</b> have a owner to feed her.	She ate trash because she didn't have a owner to feed her.	14
<b>Misformation</b>	Lily <b>look</b> the box and there was a dirty white cat sleeping in the box.	Lily looked the box and there was a dirty white cat sleeping in the box.	14
<b>Misformation</b>	when he <b>come</b> back home, he gave my mom a bear doll as a small gift.	when he came back home, he gave my mom a bear doll as a small gift.	15
<b>Misformation</b>	bolan <b>knows</b> the seller name is lengy.	bolan knew the seller name is lengy.	16
<b>Misformation</b>	but the bird <b>pops</b> his balloon also bolan became sad.	but the bird popped his balloon also bolan became sad.	16
<b>Misformation</b>	the grizzly bear <b>has</b> a plan in mind which is to catch the deer at the start of the game...	the grizzly bear had a plan in mind which is to catch the deer at the start of the game...	17
<b>Misformation</b>	the deer also <b>has</b> a plan in mind which is to run away to her house and not hide.	the deer also had a plan in mind which is to run away to her house and not hide.	17
<b>Misformation</b>	the grizzly bear <b>starts</b> counting until 20 seconds while peeking.	the grizzly bear started counting until 20 seconds while peeking.	17

The errors were examined using a quantitative approach to determine the proportion of each error type committed by the students. The percentage was calculated using the formula  $P = F/N \times 100\%$ , where P represents the percentage of errors, F denotes the frequency of a specific error type, and N is the total number of all identified errors. The results were then displayed in a percentage table. The distribution of the errors is as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Error Types

<b>Error Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Misformation</b>	42	95.5
<b>Omission</b>	2	4.5
<b>Addition</b>	0	0.0
<b>Misordering</b>	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study show that misformation overwhelmingly dominated the students' simple past-tense errors. This pattern suggests that most learners attempted to apply past-tense rules but selected forms that did not match standard English usage. In many cases, students

produced a regular -ed inflection for irregular verbs (eated, buyed, runned) or used the present-tense form in a context that clearly expressed past time. This indicates that the students were not unaware of the need to use a past-tense form; rather, they had not yet internalized the correct morphological patterns, especially those involving irregular verbs.

The dominance of misformation aligns with several previous studies on young Indonesian EFL learners. Butarbutar, for instance, also found that students often overgeneralized -ed endings when forming past verbs<sup>27</sup>. Similarly, studies by Nahak et al. and Dalilan reported that irregular-verb confusion was the most recurring pattern among elementary and lower-secondary students<sup>28</sup>. However, the present study differs from others that documented more omission errors. One possible explanation is the nature of the writing task. Narrative writing, especially short storytelling, encourages students to produce complete sentences, making omissions less frequent compared to more mechanical exercises.

Another factor that likely contributes to the high rate of misformation is L1 influence. Bahasa Indonesia does not mark verbs for tense, and time reference relies on adverbs or context. Because learners do not have an equivalent structure in their first language, they may attempt to apply general rules, such as adding -ed, without fully understanding the exceptions. This aligns with developmental sequences described in interlanguage theory, where learners progress through predictable stages but may temporarily rely on oversimplified rules.

The context of a bilingual-instruction school also adds an interesting dimension. Although students are exposed to English more frequently than in conventional Indonesian schools, much of the input they receive is classroom-based and focused on comprehension rather than production. It is possible that they hear and read correct past-tense forms during instruction but do not yet produce them accurately in their own writing. This supports claims by frequency-based

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<sup>27</sup> Butarbutar, Octavia. 2024. "Exploring the Emerging Non-Standard English Pronunciation Features of L1 Javanese And" 15 (1): 16–28.

<sup>28</sup> Nahak, Yulia Ningsi, Anselmus Sahan, and Yanuarius Seran. 2024. "AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS' USE OF SIMPLE" 06 (02): 240–50

<sup>29</sup> Dalilan, Dalilan, Noka Romadona, and Roma Nur Asnita. 2023. "ERRORS IN USING SIMPLE PAST TENSE IN NARRATIVE COMPOSITIONS MADE BY ENGLISH NON-NATIVE STUDENTS" 2 (4): 31–41. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19109/literal.v2i1.17050>.

learning theories that high exposure alone is insufficient, learners need meaningful opportunities for output, corrective feedback, and repeated practice with irregular forms.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results imply that teachers may need to devote more explicit attention to irregular verbs, especially within narrative tasks where students must recount sequences of past events. Activities such as sentence reconstruction, focused grammar mini-lessons, and guided story revision may strengthen their awareness of tense patterns. Likewise, providing regular and immediate corrective feedback, preferably through revision cycles, could help minimize fossilization of incorrect forms.

While the findings offer insight into students' developing interlanguage, the study has certain limitations. The dataset consisted of only 17 stories, and the analysis relied heavily on written production. It is possible that students might show different patterns when using spoken language or performing controlled grammar tasks. Future research could expand the dataset, include other grade levels, or employ longitudinal designs to examine whether past-tense accuracy improves over time with more exposure and feedback.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined simple past-tense errors found in 17 short stories written by elementary-school students in a bilingual-instruction setting. A total of 44 verb errors were identified and classified using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The findings showed that misformation was overwhelmingly dominant, while omission appeared only rarely and no instances of addition or misordering were found. These results suggest that the learners were aware that narrative texts require past-tense forms, yet they had not fully internalized the correct morphological patterns, particularly for irregular verbs.

The analysis also indicates that the students' interlanguage development is shaped by a combination of factors, including overgeneralization of -ed endings, limited familiarity with irregular forms, and the influence of Bahasa Indonesia, which does not mark tense morphologically. Although the bilingual-instruction context provides more exposure to English than conventional settings, exposure alone may not guarantee accurate production without sufficient opportunities for guided practice and feedback.

Pedagogically, the findings highlight the need for more explicit and sustained instruction on past-tense formation, especially involving irregular verbs within narrative tasks. Incorporating structured revision activities, meaningful output opportunities, and timely corrective feedback may help learners develop greater accuracy in expressing past events.

This study is limited by its relatively small dataset and its focus on written narratives from a single anthology. Future research could involve larger samples, include spoken data, or explore

intervention-based approaches to strengthen learners' mastery of tense morphology over time. Despite its limitations, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of past-tense acquisition among young bilingual learners and offers practical insights for grammar instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

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